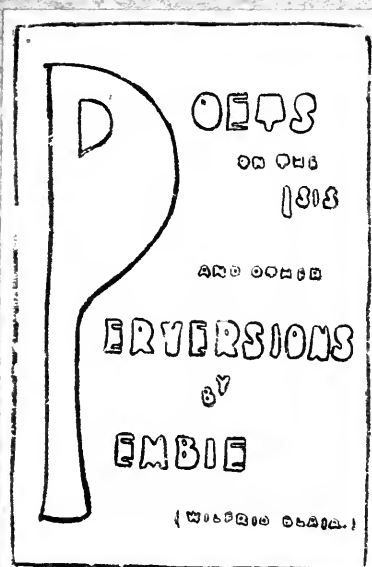


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POETS ON THE ISIS

AND OTHER PERVERSIONS

BY

WILFRID BLAIR

(‘PEMBIE’)

Oxford

B. H. BLACKWELL, 50 & 51 BROAD STREET

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TO THE
GODFATHERS

OF

THIS SMALL BOOK

R. C. LEHMANN A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

917971

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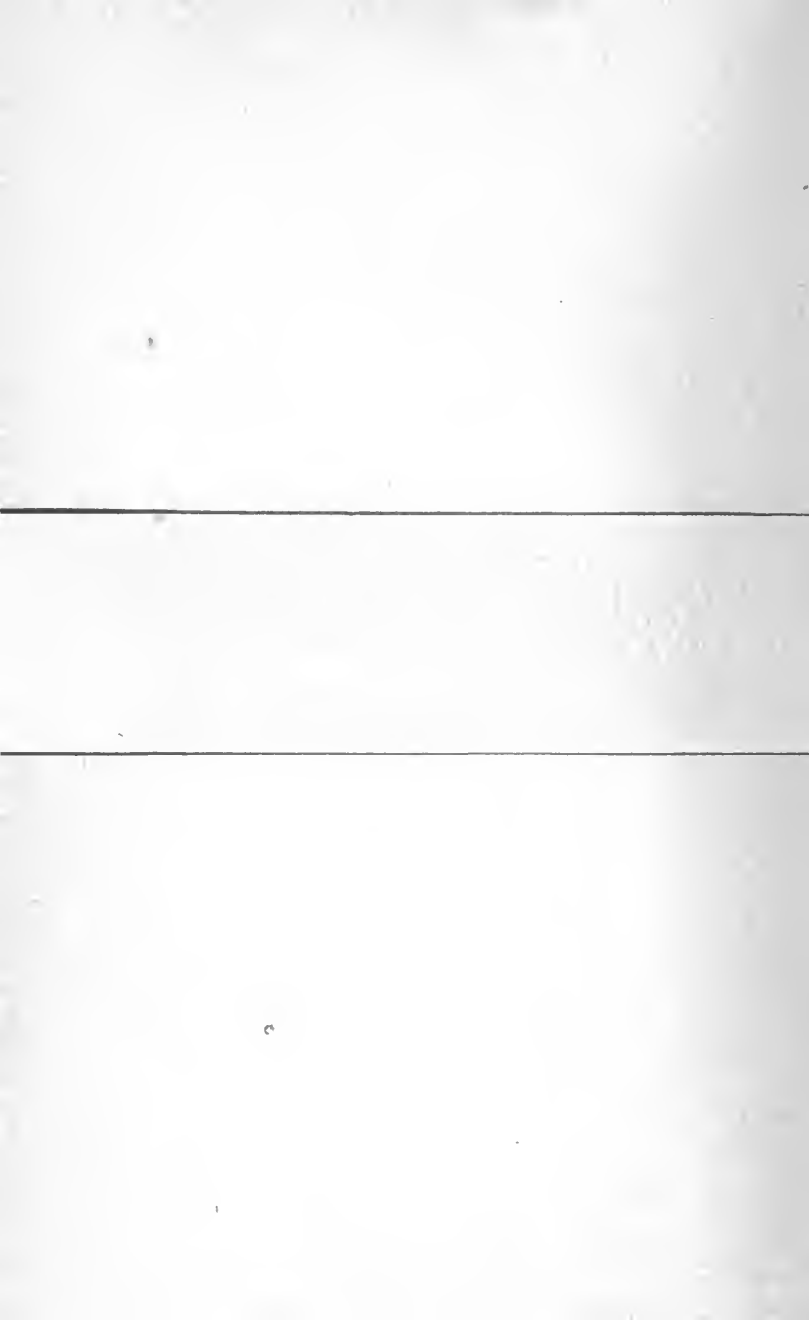
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ERRATA

- Page 49, line 1, *for float read flock.*
 „ 60, „ 4, *for straightened read straiten'd.*
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THE BALLAD OF BUTTERY BEER

I HYMN no Olympian liquor,
No tippie that Horace has sung ;
No wine makes my pulses beat quick, or
Releases the slack of my tongue ;
No whisky 'inspirits' me (*sic*), or
Beguileth a bibulous tear ;
The Lethe that deeply immerses
All cares and confusions and curses,
The fountain and source of my verse, is
Our buttery beer.

'Twas brewed in the midst of vacation,
And the sun has got into the malt ;
It served a protracted probation
In the cool of a cobwebby vault.
And now it receives acclamation,
Provokes the spontaneous cheer.—
'Was hael !' was the Saxon *dicendum*,—
The Roman cried, 'Nunc est bibendum !'—
'Cheer O !' we exclaimed, and transcend 'em
With buttery beer.

10 THE BALLAD OF BUTTERY BEER

When things are confoundedly sour,
 It makes them uncommonly sweet.
In very much less than an hour
 It makes a man queer on his feet.
O what can outrival its power !
 O what can be named as its peer !
Life's potent and peerless recruiter,
Life's genial, joyous transmuter,
(In sconces of silver and pewter),
 Is buttery beer !

I knew of a don who was crusty,
 And couldn't be mellowed with port ;
But when college beer was discussed, he
 Became quite a rollicking sport.
I knew of an eight that grew lusty,
 And left all its foes in the rear ;
Because without any complaining
Each man had been sturdily draining
Two quarts every night during training
 Of buttery beer.

Come, manciple, fill me a measure :
 As much as old Bacchus could sup !
Come, any good fellow at leisure :
 Assist me in drinking it up !

How perfectly prime is the pleasure !

(As long as my noddle is clear !)

How blessed the flagon's bright glitter !—

The bountiful liquor-emitter,—

How blissful, ebullient, bitter,

The buttery beer !

THE PROG AND THE BILLS

(After R. K.)

Who hath desired the Prog ?—the sight of Sheldonian
boundings—

The heave and the hunch and the hop and the horror of
donnish surroundings ?—

A sleek-barrelled Swell without form, invincibly puffing
and blowing—

Gauntlimbered and lanky and lean, or lazily, jerkily going—

Our Prog (and well knowing his game)—our Prog (and
quite game in the knowing)—

Our Prog as he ambles quadrilles ?

So (or I am a liar)—so (or I am a liar) Freshers desire
their Bills !

Who hath desired the Prog ?—with the dense and
contemptible Buller ?

The setter, the slayer, the snare of the bar-blabbing
Bacchanal fuller

Than orderly casks of the Trade, than rioting Kaffirs
jocunder—

Unmoved in the breach of the law and the mad un-
apologized blunder—

Our Prog (and no wonder he 's game !)—our Prog (and he 's game through each wonder !)—

Our Prog as he threatens and wills ?

So (or I am a liar)—so (or I am a liar) Freshers desire their Bills !

Who hath desired the Prog ? His penalties coarser than curses

(The intaken toll of the rag and the silver-rapt plunder of purses),

His presence half-guessed in the High and the escort and garb that declare him ;

The unstable mind fuddled with port, having sense all the same to beware him ;

Our Prog whom our sires never squared—our Prog as our sons shall not square him—

Our Prog as he freezes or grills ?

So (or I am a liar)—so (or I am a liar) Freshers desire their Bills !

Who hath desired the Prog ? His terrible stoniness better

Than pi-jaws of Deans, and his fury-most fits than restrictions that fetter

In coll., under nose of the Dons—in coll., where the porters report him—

In coll., out of reach of his arms, and the Bullers who fondly escort him—

Our Prog that unceasingly thwarts—at the last that shall finally thwart him—

Our Prog in his manifold ills ?

So (or I am a liar)—so (or I am a liar) Freshers desire their Bills !

THE PIPER OF KEBDALINBROKE

(After R. B.)

I

KEBDALINBROKE's a college
Where Isis washes hère city ;
The river wanders slowly through
By college barges and gasworks too—
You'd find no pleasanter spot, it's true,
But when a man wishes to curse it he
Recalls its share in that fell stroke
Which swept the Blues of Kebdalinbroke
From Oxford University.

II

Blues !
They fought the dons, and played the deuce
With all the 'Varsity injunctions,
And cut their lekkers without excuse,
And cursed the cook at his sacred functions,

16 THE PIPER OF KEBDALINBROKE

Got drunk on mystical private brews,
Roamed the city in riotous crews,
Even smoked in the chapel pews
 With scandalous revel,
 And went to the devil
In ties of fifty different hues.

III

At last the matter aroused attention
 In Convocation and Congregation.
Cried they, 'The Master's a ——' what I won't mention;
 'And as for the Fellows ——' their exclamation
Was quite too bad to be repeated;
'Look here,' cried they, 'you've not been seated
In College seats and richly treated
Merely to thrive on the College revenue.
Kick out your Blues, Sirs, or by Heaven! you
Shan't remain in your snug position,
For unless you improve this ill condition
We'll make it the point of a Royal Commission!'
At this the Master and each Fellow
Turned a decidedly bilious yellow.

IV

An hour they argued round it,
 Until the Master's temper

Burst into angry speech : ' Confound it !

Things are "*eadem semper*" !

Kebdalinbroke's curs'd Blues may go to——

But how can I send them there *in toto* ?

Oh ! for a trick, a trick, a trick ! '——

He'd scarcely uttered this, when quick

At the common room door there came a kick.

' Oh ! ' cried the Master, feeling sick,

' Bless my heart, what *is* the matter ! '

(His spirit falling rather flatter

Than a too-long-opened champagne bottle),—

' Bless my heart ! ' cried the Master, ' what 'll

Have made that noise ? Come in there, do !

Anything like the sound of a Blue

Makes my heart jump ! Don't it you ? '

v

Then in did come (to cut it short)

A figure of the strangest sort,

Who, after making an explanation,

Cried, ' Now, gentlemen, if I rid

Your college of its molestation,

Will you give me a thousand quid ? '

' One ? fifty thousand quid ! '—outspoke

The Master and Fellows of Kebdalinbroke.

c

VI

Into the street he straight departed ;
On his magic pipe he blew ;
And ere the strains had fully started
Penetrating through and through
With a horrible sort of staccato stuttering,
You heard as it were an angry spluttering ;
And the spluttering grew to a swearing ;
And the swearing grew to a full-lunged blaring ;
And out of the college the Blues came tearing ;
Full Blues, half Blues, old Blues, new Blues,
Rowing Blues, running Blues, cricket Blues, rugger
Blues,—
Blues in every conceivable pastime,
Blues in every conceivable strife,
Striving and jostling now for the last time,
Followed the Piper to have his life ;
And still as the music wrung the liver,
And they ran after to have his gore,
He led them down to the bank of the river,
Wherein all plunged and were lost evermore.

VII

But just as the Fellows with one accord
Danced a jig on the College sward,

And the Master indulged in mild frivolity,
The Piper's face poked up amid
The corporate body's unseemly jollity,
With a 'Kindly fork out my thousand quid!'

VIII

'Ho, ho!' cried the Master, and gave a laugh,
'A thousand quid? My friend, with half
We'd stock the College bins with Port.
Here—take a five-pound note, old sport!'
And then, as his language waxed profuser:
'A thousand quid? Oh, go to the deuce, sir!'

IX

He stepped into the street again,
And uttered such a fiendish strain
As highland bagpipe never shrilled,
Or band or barrel-organ thrilled.
There was a rattling, that seemed like a tattling,
Or the sound of a Gatling on armies a-battling.
Voices were clamouring, noisy feet hammering,
Lexicons slamming, and loud tongues bad-grammaring,
And out where the music was stuttering and stammering—
Out came each Scholar
O'er-bubbling with choler,

20 THE PIPER OF KEBDALINBROKE

And roused from their studious cogitations,
And stung by the music's dire inflictions,
Followed with awful imprecations,
Followed with frightful maledictions.
And the cheated Piper buried twice his
Convoy in the river Isis.

X

Alas, alas for Kebdalinbroke !
The Master and all the Dons with dolour
Suffered the loss of every Scholar
(Besides the Blues) at a single stroke !
And the corporate body was forced to agree
The career of the College was all U.P.

XI

So, Dons, continue to let your Blues
Behave entirely as they choose :
Recalling this tragedy, take warning from Isis,
And in promising aught, just stick to your promises.

CHANTS OF THE RIVER

(OCTOBER TERM)

*Rhythm and swing, such as poets are born to achieve,—
Glorious lore !*

*Tortures and torments and pangs, the rewards we receive,—
Horrible bore !*

*O we labour, we agonize under
The beauty, the magic, the wonder,
And that which no glory can sunder,—
The pain of the oar !*

I. OF THE TUB

Fresherling, my Fresherling, come forward, if you please !

Forward, O, and paddle like a man !

(How the river murmurs to the rustle of the trees !)

Try and feel a pressure just before you lift your knees !

Turn, O turn your feather, if you can !

If you row like that, you'll never get into the Eight :

(Listen to the burden of my song !)

There are twenty thousand habits you're inclined to
cultivate,

And every single one of them is wrong !

Gently coming forward, O, my little heart of oak !

Gently, while your little chest expands.

(Life is full of ups and downs, and isn't all a joke)—

Keep your backbone stiffened at the finish of the stroke !

Lightly, very lightly, with your hands !

You're distinctly shocking, and I put it pretty straight,

(Listen to the burden of my song !)

There are twenty thousand habits you're inclined to
cultivate,

And every single one of them is wrong !

II. OF THE JUNIOR FOURS

This is——what we——do for——pleasure,

This is——how we——use our——leisure,—

I'm as heavy as a brick,

And my hands are never quick,—

Ugh !

I am *never* 'steady forward', I can *never* 'pull it
through' ;

But I go on feeling sick,

And I feather, swing, and kick,

Till the crack of doom approaches, and till everything
is blue.

Barges,—Green Bank,—Weirs Bridge,—Iffley,

Swinging—crooked,—swinging—stiffly,

Crawling tamely down the tide
With a lurching sort of glide.—

O !

The more I swing my body down, the sorer do I grow,
As I slither, shift, and slide
On my scarifying hide,
Asking—Why, why, why, did I ever start to row ?

III. OF THE COXLESS FOURS

We are the beggars that count,
Reeling off mile after mile,
Doing a decent amount
In a highly exemplary style.
Swing,—swing,—swing !
(Curse you, get out of our way !)
Watch us, O watch, as our oar-blades fling
The backward splash of our spray !

We are the bloods of the blue,
Proud of our prowess and pow'rs.
Erratic the course we pursue,
For the river is all of it ours.
Legs,—legs,—legs !
(Curse you, you're holding us up !)
Hard on it, hard ! and we'll drain to the dregs
The glorious drink of our cup.

IV. OF THE TRIAL EIGHTS

Trial Eights, we are swinging swiftly by,—

Mind your eye !

Clear the river, stand and watch us as we fly !!

Though we look extremely good,

We are slow, and stiff as wood,

And we'd slack it, if we could,

On the sly.

But we've fought, and here we are !

And by Isis and by Cher,

By the Coach's venom'd vials,

By the Coach's keen espials,

We intend to stay and struggle in the Trials—

(Feather high !)

V. OF THE 'VARSITY EIGHT

Swing together, and

Swing tremendously !

Smartly feather, and

Work stupendously !

Down to Iffley and home once more !

Gliding steadily,

Spurting readily,

Gods o' the river and lords o' the oar !

Full swing—way for the
 To-and-fro of it !
 Full stream—hey for the
 Flood and flow of it,
 Crossed by currents and flecked with foam !
 Full of grit are we,
 Fain and fit are we,—
 Get well down to it ! Home, bring her home !

*Rhythm and swing, such as poets are born to achieve,—
 Glorious lore !
 Tortures and torments and pangs, the rewards we receive,—
 Horrible bore !
 O we labour, we agonize under
 The beauty, the magic, the wonder,
 And that which no glory can sunder,—
 The pain of the oar !*

THE NOYES OF BATTLE

(*Concluding fragment of 'Drake : an English epic'*)

(After A. N., late of Exeter College)

Drake plunders a Galleon.

MEANWHILE, the wind had changed, and Francis Drake
Put down the helm, and drave against the seas.
Once more the wind changed, and the simple seaman,
Full-fraught with weather-wisdom, once again
Put down the helm, and so drave on, until
The everlasting and omnipotent
Dawn, through the splendid gloom and golden clouds,
Broke ; and a great, golden, gilded galleon
In raggy piles of gloom and shaggy splendour
Rose up against them, clouded with the dawn.
Plushed, plumed, and purpled on th' imperious poop,
Crusty with cramoisy, the Spaniards stood.
Being strangely rash, and really rather rude,
They quite refused surrender, till Drake cried,
' I am El Draque ! '—At once they recognized
The name, tho' spoken with a Devon burr.
Down came their flag at once upon the deck,
As when a fragment of the ceiling falls.

Doom-fraught, fear-fraught, and fraught with other things,

They yielded to the Dragon, who disgorged
The gorgeous galleon, wallowing with the wealth
Of world-wide, whacking empires, and straightway
towed

It to the blooming blue of Torbay.

Drake attacks the Fleet.

What

Tremendous thunder bursts triumphantly ?
Is it—*El Draque* ? *El Draque* it is ! (Not 'arf !)
The Dragon of the Apocalypse is here
With Michael and his angels, hand in glove.
Vexed by the violent volleys, th' Invincible Fleet
Staggers and surges, stampedes, struggles, and swerves,
Whirled wildly down to hell like Lucifer
In that stupendous Salamis. (Which means
They cut their sticks and did a bunk.)

Drake holds a Council.

At last

Drake flew his signal. (It was night again :
The wind had changed : the helm had been put down.)
Then in tremendous council, closely clustered

Howard, Hawkins, Frobisher, to whom Drake seemed
A tower of doom, unswervingly implacable—
Implacably unswerving doom to Spain—
Inevitably unconquerable doom.—
Clad with the night, hosed with the sheeny sea,
And buttoned up with many myriad stars,
Shoving his iron face to Howard's so close
That one might see he had not shaved himself,—
A face tempered like steel with wrought-iron lips,—
He stretched his iron-clad arm, and hissed to Howard
Such awful simple wisdom weather-fraught,
Beastly monotonous with unconquerable
Passion, that Howard softly sibilated,
And Hawkins slapped his grimly gaskined leg.
All stared upon that mighty simple seaman,
Drawing his plan in mighty sweeping strokes
(As of Sir Jessop stepping out to drive).
He seemed to them a rock of adamant,
A god of battle, hell ris'n, our ocean king,
A granite crag, a Caesar-summoning soul,
Irrevocably omnipotential.

Drake ends the Business.

So things went on until the end of things,
When, blasting, blanching, bursting all their bulk,

Drake drave the sea-fraught Spaniards to the North
In golden clouds of grimly clouded gold.
Then, the wind changing, helm-down, thundering over
The rolling triumph of the major sea,
Drake swept to the South—F. Drake, whose ocean fame
Shall ever more wash the world with thunder, and
With a towel of ragged splendour lightning-torn
Dry up.

Drake turns in.

So with instructions to the wheel
Drake went below, and had a glass of grog.

‘ BUTLER AN’ ‘ OUSEMAID, TOO ’

(Spoken by an undergraduate temporarily obsessed by the
cockneyisms of R. K.)

As I come into me College rooms in Michaelmas, Nine-
teen blank,

I seed a man in ’is shirt-sleeves there of a nindeterm’nate
rank.

’E was scrapin’ a label off of me trunk, an’ I sez to ’im,

‘ ’Ow d’you do ?’

Sez ’e, ‘ I’m a Scout—a ’Vawsity Scout—butler an’
’ousemaid, too ! ’

Now ’e does ’is work from early dorn to the fall of
evenin’ dew ;

You wouldn’t call ’im a Christian quite, nor ’e ain’t
a measly Jew.

’E’s a kind of an ’eathen ’old-me-tight—butler an’
’ousemaid, too !

An’ after I met ’im all over the shop, a-doin’ all kinds
of men,

An’ clearin’ you out of superfluous things, like they do
in a gamblin’ den.

’E dusts with a napkin, instead of a clout, an’ ’e sets
your pictures askew,
An’ ’e works like a Scout—a ’Vawsity Scout—butler an’
’ousemaid, too !
’E can tell by the froth on the top o’ the beer if it ’s
buttery private brew—
You can turn up as tight as a bladder o’ lard, an’ ’e ’ll
manage to pull you through—
’E ’s a sort of a cornucopianite—butler an’ ’ousemaid,
too !

We’ve cursed ’im in sitter, we’ve cursed ’im in bed, and
said things somewhat rash,
When ’e called us at ’arf a minute to eight, an’ we called
’im the Blankety Dash ;
But, when we was out of whisky an’ port, an’ didn’t
know wot to do,
We yelled for the Scout—the ’Vawsity Scout—butler
an’ ’ousemaid, too !
’E looks for ’isself, an’ ’e steals for ’isself, an’ ’e never
asks me nor you—
But when we’re in bed, an’ asleep in bed, we’d sleep till
all was blue,
If it weren’t for the rampin’ velocipede—butler an’
’ousemaid, too !

32 ' BUTLER AN' 'OUSEMAID, TOO '

We may be fond of a lekker-cut, or yëllin' in College
quads,
Or when we are bored we may mutiny respecting of
Smalls and Mods ;
But once in a while we can work in style—when the end
of the term 's in view,
The same as the Scout—the 'Vawsity Scout—butler an'
'ousemaid, too !
'E 's a shady lot—'e 's brother to us, though we wears
our clothes more new,
An' takin' 'is chest circumf'rence p'rhaps 'e 's double o'
me an' you ;
You may call 'im a double convolvulus—butler an'
'ousemaid, too !

'E may be a liar, 'e may be a thief, an' 'e may be fond of
a spree,
But I lets that pass when I look in the glass, an' sez,
' Well, wot price me ! '
An' it makes you think better of all concerned, an' the
work you don't mean to do,
When you think o' the blinkin' 'Vawsity Scout—butler
an' 'ousemaid, too !
Now you can't pretend you don't compre'end, for 'e 's
proved it plain and true,

That ‘e does the ‘Vawsity’s dirty work—Christian,
‘Eathen, or Jew,
‘E does it, the Scout—the ‘Vawsity Scout—butler an’
‘ousemaid, too !

‘ SCORN NOT THE SONNET ’

(In lecturing on the poetry of Oxford, the Professor of Poetry made appreciative reference to a sonnet on the Radcliffe Square in a recent volume of verse, and regretted that there were not more Oxford sonnets expressing the same spirit. Can it be that the Professor of Poetry is unaware of the existence of the following, which we have taken the liberty of quoting in full?)

1. COLLEGE QUADS

OR grass or gravel, matters not. Not it !
Frequent around the verdant verge there pass
The vocal undergrads. ; and ‘ silly ass ! ’
Calls each to other, blithe with blooming wit.
Scornful of dons the little dickies sit,
Nor fear a fine for being on the grass ;
While now and then the scouts (a menial class),
Bearing the urgent grub, responsive flit.

But O, but O, when caterwauling night,
Rousing the Porter in a brace of shakes,
Urges the Blood to youthful liberty !
Then, then the bonfire gives its lawless light,
While *Our Miss Gibbs*, loud gramaphoned, awakes
The immemorial Tutor’s ecstasy.

2. THE HIGH

Your aspect has no crudity to mar
 The chaste contentment of our pious gaze.
 The varied lures of shopmen, the sweet maze
 Of scaffolding salute us from afar,
 And through the scene creeps the decrepit car.
 All men meander on their several ways,
 While here the artist all his skill displays
 To catch you, bending downwards to the Cher.

Leave Princes Street, O Scotchman, in the lurch !
 Come, ‘ tak’ the High road,’ as your poet saith !
 Londoner, let the Old Kent Road go by !
 Serene *noblesse*, and venison, and the Church
 May boast their Highness—let them save their breath !
 We hail but you, the quintessential High !

3. BUOL’S

Buol’s, belov’d of them wot cull the grape !
 O Buol’s, where the ebullient undergrad
 Gambols nocturnally ! Your halls the lad
 Adjourns to, to enjoy his giddy jape ;
 And, when he has enjoyed it, lays three ha’p-
 ence, tipwise for the waitress, passing glad
 With lager which was really not so bad
 (As lager goes), and makes a swift escape.

Your fane the Proctor nightly desecrates—

He and his train, petulant, tantalized.

And here, while Hebe not accelerates

Her nimble ministration, though advised

By the imperious bell, the viol grates

And music sounds, even as advertised.

4. THE BODLEIAN

Carefully fill your form up (don't forget

The number of your seat); then in the tray

Deposit it; finally go away,

When you have rung the bell. You must not let

Impatience for the book disturb you yet.

Curse not the staff! Twiddle your thumbs, or play

At Naughts and Crosses for an hour; for they

Intend to reach the volume: do not fret.

Think with what boldness for your sake they tread

Accurst book-laden labyrinths, among

The drear and dusty archives; where 'tis said

The bloated bookworm shoots his horrid tongue,

And the vile microbe, tucking in his head,

Dives neatly on his foe's defenceless lung.

THE EIGHTS

(After W. W.)

O to make the most jubilant romanza !
Full of manhood, full of womanhood—the Female
equally with the Male !
I will sing about the Eights.

Allons ! for the minute-gun has gone.
I see the bank, and the boats stretched out along the
bank, and the eight figures in each boat, and each
of the eight figures taking off his sweater.
I endeavour to catch a sweater which is thrown to me.
I see the sweater in the water.
I hear a word which I ought not to have heard.
O camerado !
I see the oars in Identity in due order, and the oars of
the boat *arrière* in due order.
I see the man who holds the stop-watch, and who counts.
Bang !

The joy of the race !
The motion of brawny arms and hips in airy costumes,

Strong shapes, and the masculinity of sights and sounds,
The sweep and fall of the oars, the continual crash of
the buttons striking the riggers,

The blasphemous command through the trumpet.

(Hear him, for he is the Coach ! Understand him and
know that his speech is right !)

The en-massivity of it all,

The whirr of rattles, the thunder of feet,

The *mêlée*, the *mélange*,

(Dear camerado, for goodness sake get out of my way !

I confess I urge you onward, but I don't know
where the dickens we are getting to !)

The sound of my voice !

O my voice !

My lungs, my lungs dilate, my tongue has come to me,
I sing to you.

Insensate, insensate,—but at any rate I am making
a row.

Hard on it ! Hard on it ! Well rowed, O well rowed, sir !
Omnes, omnes, camerados !

Louder, higher, stronger, roll out the thunder of the
voice !

Buck up, camerados, buck up !

(I feel that my voice has pegged out.

I feel that it is just my confounded luck.)

Joy, you beggars, joy !

(Though I am just about dead I cry.)

She is clear at last, she leaps !

She is going like blazes !

I see that we are going to bump.

I see . . .

Somebody has knocked me down in the press.

O Captain, my Captain ! . . .

Once more I see, gymnastic ever !

Shoot, Libertad ! shoot, camerado ! shoot, you little
fool !

(Call'd by your nighest name by clear loud voices of
young men as they see you making a mess of it.)

I see that we have made our bump.

It is enough. Easy all !

Well rowed, O you belovèd rowing habitués !

Enough, O deed impromptu and sudden !

Enough, O panting present—enough, O sweating past !

I love you. I depart from the material, the banality of
formules.

I am as one absolutely winded, triumphant, pretty well
corpsed.

I regain my voice.

I regain the barge.

I behold the sisters of my camerados, and the mothers
of the sisters of my camerados.

The sisters of my camerados are ripping.

But the mothers are not.

I behold a damsel, smartly attired, countenance smiling,
soul divine under the *crêpe-de-chine* and gloves,
under the ribbons and artificial flowers.

In my inward spirit I ask, 'Are you smiling at me?'

Me, considerably *perturbe*?

Closer yet I approach you.

I say, will you introduce me to your sister?

Thanks awfully, camerado.

O comrade and lover!

You who love me, and whom I love (I laid in my stores
in advance), sitting close by to hold you by the hand!

Here we two, content, happy, and talking no more than
is absolutely necessary.

I whisper with my lips close to your ear, as you lie
with your head on my shoulder.

I have been in love before, but you fairly take the
biscuit, *ma femme*.

O ripen'd joy of womanhood! O happiness at last!

(Who says I am not enjoying this, though I have been
dilatatory and dumb?)

Fancy how happy you would be if you could be with
me and become my comrade !

O female camerado !

O I say, may I call you—— ?

An elderly lady comes !

More than eighty years of age, a most venerable mother.

O my Venus, it is *your* blooming mother !

O soul, we have had a jolly good time—that is enough.

PHILIP LIPPY

OXFORD, 19—.

(After R. B.)

I'm Lippy of St. Mary's! Name and coll.,
You know 'em and you take 'em? Oh, all right!
You needn't keep on staring in my face.
Hang it, what's up? You see an undergrad.
What, nearly midnight, and you're prowling round,
And catch me (just my luck!) without a gown!
(Confound you, take your clutches off my coat!
I won't run off again. I'd like to know
How you contracted such a strangle-hold!)—
And you, sir, dash it all! you ought to see
Your Bullers pick up manners, if they can.
Confound it, are we convicts, that they chase—
Ferret us out, and chase us through the streets?
He'd make a good three-quarter, that man there!
Jove, I'm not angry! Let your bulldogs go
Get drunk upon this tip—quite drunk, like me
(And many more beside, lads, more beside!)
Yes, I'm the Rugger Blue. You know me, then?

Let's sit down here, and I'll excuse myself.
Consider : I've been gated for three weeks,
Sweating to please the dons at Smalls and Smalls
And Smalls again. Well, could I work all night?—
Some men I know came laughing down the street
Beneath the window, bent on having sport.—

Hal o' the House,

Devil a better for sport and carouse !

Johnnie o' Sinjohn,

Rags the whole place like a rampin' Red Injun !

Well, hang it ! could I stand it ? Out I got,
(Never mind how), and caught the beggars up
Just outside Buol's here, cheer O, good man !—

Norty o' New,

If I've been merry, what matter to you ?

And so as I was reeling back again
To get to coll., your Bullers snap me up.

I see you laugh, but still you shake your head—
Mine wears a mortar-board—or should—you say.
Come, what the devil do I do it for ?
I came up here straight from a public school.
'Twas not for nil—the fairly decent grub,
The ragging, and the joke that goes all round,
And all day long the blessed dons defied !

But first they'd have me reading for a School.
Lord, when I showed 'em up a Latin Prose!

Charlie o' Keble

's efforts at Latin were shockingly feeble!

But, mind you, when a boy has learnt his game
Eight years together, as I had, you know,
Squashed in the scrum, and sat on in the mud,
He learns the way o' things. The dons looked
black.

'No,' said the Master, 'send him down? Not me!
You catch me! 'Lose his battel money then.
What if at last our college gets its Blue,
To put the side on that it ought to have!'
And hereupon they bade me play away.
And so I do, and there's my life in short.

Well, hang it all, of course I've broken bounds—
You shouldn't tell a fresher of nineteen
To not be out of college after twelve.

Some of them threaten—'Just you wait, my son!
You've got to get through Smalls, or out you go!'

Merry o' Merton,

Screwed up the Dea . . . Devil with only his shirt on!

Before I go, I'll plague 'em. Hang the fools!

Look here, don't get me in a row for this !
If I stay up you'll go some six months hence
And see me play at Queen's Club—scuttle through
The ruck, and score maybe. Go, six months hence !
Thanks awfully, sir ! Good-night ! I'll go straight back,
Don't fear me ! Whew ! There's Old Tom striking. D— !

TO THE DON WHO PLOUGHED ME IN MODS

(After W. E. H.)

OR ever the College beers were gone
With Oxford to the bad,
I was a Moderating Don
And you were an Undergrad.

I saw, I took, I Viva'd you,
I ploughed and squashed your side ;
You worked like sin, if the tale was true,
But your work was misapplied.
Sorely the fever raged ere you
Tore up your books and died.

And a myriad men have worked upon
Mods papers no less bad,
Since those which the Moderating Don
Disdained of the Undergrad.

The side I shattered is set once more,
For it shatters me with disdain.

TO THE DON WHO PLOUGHED ME IN MODS 47

The injury I did of yore
Lives still in your vaster brain.
I break my teeth on your hoarded lore,
And I break my teeth with pain.

Yet never again do I wish to con
The stuff which I barred as bad,
When I was a Moderating Don
And you were an Undergrad.

L'ENVOYAGING

(After R. K.)

THERE'S an echo down the High where they sell the
latest tie

And the waistcoats flare like the sun,
Crying: 'Drop your modish manner, for you cannot
pay a tanner,

And the Oxford tradesmen dun.'

You have known the heat of the tearing grind,
And the thresh of the driving oar;
And the coach's song: 'Keep it long! keep it
long!'

Swing out on the course once more!

Ha' done with Attempts at Mods, old man,
For the season's out of date,
And it's time to turn to our own course, the old course,
the home course,
Swing out, swing out, on the Full Course—the course of
the College Eight.

It's East you may float to the Lasher and the Lock
Or West where the Barges stray ;
Or Southward on the flank you may charge into the bank,
And North in a similar way ;
Where the rolling troughs are deep, old man,
And the broadside gales are great,
And the men sweat hard on our own course, the old
course, the home course,
And the boat runs free on the Full Course—the course of
the College Eight.

The Schools are stale and old, and I've got a horrid cold,
And I sit and swot in a draught ;
And my tired soul is sick for the lifting driving kick
Of the fleet infernal craft.
With a slicing forward splash, old man,
And a floundering fresher freight,
And her bow-side down on our own course, the old
course, the home course,
From the Lasher up on the Full Course—the course of
the College Eight.

There be triple blues to score, of the batsman and the oar,
And the man who can pass and punt ;
But the oar is best of all with its mighty sweep and fall
On the heels of the Next in Front.

Can you feel the thrill of our bows, old man,
And our timbers' grind and grate,
As we make our bump on our own course, the old course,
the home course,
As we lift and bump on the Full Course—the course of
the College Eight.

See the shaking gun'els soar, as we heave them up and
o'er,
And the stretchers groan and start,
And the straining riggers crash, as the buttons turn and
flash,
And the oar-blades swoop and dart ;
It's 'Stroke, drop in, drop in, old man,'
It's 'Number Four, you're late !'
And it's 'Hold her up !' on our own course, the old
course, the home course,
Or it's 'Back her down !' on the Full Course—the
course of the College Eight.

Oh the swish along the side as we check and jump and
glide,
And the sickening lurch when she rocks !
Oh the long tremendous sweep as we pick it up and leap
To the cry of the counting cox !

It's down by the Water Stone, old man,
In the jaws of the Gut we hate,
Till the Green Bank glides on our own course, the old
 course, the home course,
And the Red Post points on the Full Course—the course
 of the College Eight.

Oh we drive her hard along where the sweating, swerving
 throng
 Are turning two by two.
Her proboscis sternutates through the constellated eights
 That wheel in the crowded blue.
We are sorely scarred by the seat, old man,
But we're sitting firm and straight,
And we're swinging down on our own course, the old
 course, the home course,
We're swaggering west on the Full Course—the course
 of the College Eight.

Then home, bring her home, where the boiling eddies
 foam,
 And the shouting hordes rush by,
And the barges blear and blare, and we reel and swing
 and tear,
 While the voice of the Coach rings high !

And the grand Old Blues come back, old man,
In their dark-blue-blazered state.
They're all old Bloods on our own course, the old course,
the home course,
They're following over the Full Course—the course of
the College Eight.

Steady forward is the art, but be nippy at the start—
Our stroke is all too slow ;
We must pick it up and charge by the little lively barge
Where the college colours blow !
You have known the sob of the tearing grind,
And the throb of the driving oar,
And the coach's song : ' Keep it long ! keep it long ! '
Swing out on the course once more !

The Coach knows what we are like, old man,
And the Coach knows what is our fate,
But we're back once more on our own course, the old
course, the home course,
Swing down, well down, on the Full Course—the course
of the College Eight.

THE TAILOR'S MAN

DELICATESSE he walked abroad,

(Sing hey, for the gay petunia tie !)

And the gracious gods were pleased to applaud,

As Delicatesse came passing by.

He walked with a languid step and slow ;

Ever and anon he would gently stop.

(Sing ho, for we know that the ties are all a-glow,

And the socks are all a-dangle in the hosier's shop !)

His *tout ensemble* was a mauve effect,—

(Sing hey, for the gay petunia tie !)

The most sublime, and the most correct

That ever had graced the Oxford 'High'.

His whole rig-out from top to toe

Was a sight to make beholders drop.

(Sing ho, for we know that the scarves are all on show,

And the socks are all a-dangle in the hosier's shop !)

O Delicatesse has an anxious life !

(Sing hey, for the gay petunia tie !)

He spends whole days in a stubborn strife

When the crease of a trouser runs awry,

And he battles gamely, laying low

Recalcitrant curls on his unctuous mop.

(Sing ho, for we know that the hats are in a row,

And the socks are all a-dangle in the hosier's shop !)

O not for him the foughten field,

(Sing hey, for the gay petunia tie !)

Where the stick is whirled, or the ball is heeled,—

Where College colours lose their dye !

'Tis his to observe how fashions flow,

To reap the season's newest crop.

(Sing ho, for we know that the coloured kerchiefs grow,

And the socks are all a-dangle in the hosier's shop !)

Nor yet for him the weary Schools,

(Sing hey, for the gay petunia tie !)

For there assemble unsightly fools,

And dons, who offend an aesthete's eye.

But his head, maybe, is a matter for woe,

With water within and oil on top.

(Sing ho, for we know that the waistcoats bloom and blow,

And the socks are all a-dangle in the hosier's shop !)

Delicatesse, good youth, still goes

(Sing hey, for the gay petunia tie !)

Sauntering, full of ornate repose,

Beneath the sneer of the simple sky.

Well—Lord love him ! let him go :

What quarrel have we with a harmless fop ?

Sing ho, for we know—and it 's really *à propos*—

That the socks are all a-dangle in the hosier's shop !

CALIBAN UPON THE PROCTOR

(After R. B.)

[' WILL stay here, though 'tis after ten o' the clock,
Getting quite drunk upon the bar's much drink.
' Will stay, because it vexes Him, and talk,
Because himself can't help it, being drunk.]

Proctor, Senior Prog, or Junior Prog !

' Thinketh, He liveth with a cold o' the nose.

' Thinketh, He caught it being out o' nights,
And catcheth other Things, too, when He can.

' Thinketh, it came of being on the prowl :
He hateth that He cannot lose His cold,
So catcheth other Things to pleasure Him.

' Hath spied a man who sweated at an oar,
And longed to 'scape the toil ; but ever he
Grew sick o' slacking it, and chucked the life
(Top-hole and dam-delightful), not his life,
And turned once more to sweating at the oar,
Hating it but yet doing ; ditto Him.

'Thinketh, 'am not an eyesore to Him : no,
 'Am what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—
 Thing He admires, though proggeth—that is it.
 'Is vexed His job is such a beastly grind,
 Yet makes the best o' 't, treats it sportingly ;
 So proggeth Things He catcheth, yet admires.
 Put case, I have to be in coll. by twelve,
 Yet make the best o' 't, take my chance in here.
 Look, I mix tippie, pour in plenty Scotch,
 Then squirt in Soda till the bubbles rise,
 And drink up all, no-heeler, till I feel
 Words running, hot and happy, in my head.
 Try to forget must be in coll. by twelve—
 Try to enjoy myself so : ditto Him.

'Thinketh, it doth not make Him seem a cad.
 'Remembereth, himself hath sat o' nights,
 Watching men pass beneath his windows—tramps :
 Twenty, perhaps : and let them pass, and then
 Thrown jug of water over twenty-first,
 Just choosing so. 'Say over this who swears,
 Or who expectorates in passing by,
 Or who looks extra grubby : ditto Him.

But wherefore prowleth, and why hath a cold ?
 Aha, you're asking now ! Ask for that Power

Above the Proctor that created Him,
And now sits quiet while He works His will.

' Careth not for the Power but the Prog,
Who, seeing that He cannot lose His cold,
Sit quiet and not prow, makes Himself feared
And proggeth. 'Hath himself observed the way.

Is vexed he cannot rule, so makes believe.
'Hath gotten him a gown, and mortar-board,
'Keepeth two servants, too, brought somewhat tame,
And partly made obedient, whom he wills
To do his bidding, serve him, make him fire,
And rouse him out o' mornings to his task.
'Plays thus he is a Power in a way,
Taking his mirth with baubles : ditto Him.

'Saith He's a rotter : 'knows He hath a spite
'Gainst me, but favours others for a whim.
'Hath caught me on the hop some several times,
And pounded me with penalties, and yet
Others will please Him, and He lets them go.
'Wishes could please Him so and not be progged !
If He would tell me how, then would go forth
And cross His path o' nights and never care.
'Have seen a Coach curse this one for a fault,
And pass that by, though being all as bad ;
So that this looked for slanging, that for praise.

But did, forsooth, the praised one count on praise,
And say, 'So must he always do with me,'
Straightway the Coach would curse him : ditto Him.

'S'poseth the beggar will go on like this
Till crack o' doom, and so must fear Him still.
Meanwhile, to 'scape Him it is best to seem
Not boisterously cheered, but wormish-like,
Obscure and crushed. 'Would have Him make mistake,
Suppose this Caliban's a decent sort.
Wherefore he dodgeth Him as best he may,
Drinketh in private, weareth cap and gown
Before His face, and ever hopes that He
Will some year go to sleep and good as die.

[What, what ? Not Him ? . . . 'Careth not if it be !
'Shall do no bunk ; 'cannot be him !—but, yes,
There scuds His Buller that has caught me here !
'Was a dashed fool to talk—fool to get drunk !
'Saluteth Proctor, 'saith He is a brick !
'Hath lost his cap and gown, 'hath drank no drop,
And never will again, so he may go !]

THE SCHOOLS

(After A. T.)

KINDLY do not interrupt me, while I have a chance to
mourn,

For I feel inclined to dally with the dithyrambs of scorn.

'Tis a place you may have noticed—the Examination
Schools,

Where they prematurely crease the straightened fore-
heads of the fools.

Here I desperately blundered, nourishing a foolish hope
That with certain of the papers I might confidently cope.

Vainly did I gnaw my knuckles 'neath the stress of every
shock,

Vainly did I watch the hour-hand sloping slowly round
the clock.

Then I dipt into the future, and I knew that it was glum,
For I saw the wicked Viva, and the cropper I should
come,—

In the term the wanton stripling gets himself another suit ;
In the term the careless oarsman very often gets the
boot ;

In the term we ring the changes on the modes of breaking
rules ;

In the term the fresher's fancy never turns towards the
Schools.

Then his cheek is often greater than should be for one so
young,
And his side is simply awful, and his neck is sometimes
wrung.

But the callous Senior Tutor took the matter in his hands,
And my rest was rudely broken by impossible demands.

Many a morning did I listen to the futile things he said,
And his lectures thrilled my pulses, and I longed to punch
his head.

Many a night I swotted Plato, with a crib and with a tip,
But they got mixed up together, and I fairly got the pip.

Moderators, shallow-hearted ! Moderators, old and hoar !
Oh the dreary, dreary cramming ! Oh the beastly,
beastly bore !

Falser than my falsest Logic, falser than my Roman dates,
Coolly setting Pass Mods. papers of a standard asked in
Greats !

Is it well that I should spare you, when you brutally decline
To put ' Satis ' on my papers, some of which I thought
were fine ?

Cursèd be the silly question on the Germans' Gallic raid !
Cursèd be the silly howler that I promptly went and made !

Cursèd be the sneakish forms in which an honest ques-
tion's tucked !

Cursèd be the golden sovereigns that I squandered to be
plucked !

Comfort ? comfort go to blazes ! I believe the theory's right,
That the one way out of sorrow is to get extremely tight.

Drug your memory, do not strain it with a wild and
futile cram

In the dead unhappy night-time, just before a vain exam.

You will find it's simply useless—you are staring at the
wall

Where the clock is slowly moving, and you cannot think
at all.

You will hear the old ' Non Satis ' ringing harshly in your
ear,
And you'll feel the only comfort in your wretchedness is
beer.

What is that which I should turn to, being plucked
beyond a doubt ?

I must mix myself a whisky while I think the matter out.

Every gate is throng'd with tutors : I am fairly up a tree.
Every door admits the Classes, but I haven't a Degree.

Oh I yearn for large excitement, and I know what I will
do :

Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, I will grapple for my Blue.

I will leave the weary clanging of the many-wintered
rooks—

Turn thee, turn thee, O my tutor, to your miserable
books.

I would dip into the future, but I think you'd find it slow,
And my mighty mind advises me to drop my pen and go

From the shadow of the Schools to where the 'Varsity's
at play :

Better half a Blue at Hockey than a tentative B.A.

THE WEATHER

A WHITMAN MÉLANGE

A RUDE brief warble,
Brief in the comparative degree, rude in the degree
superlative.

What think you I am going to write about ?
The Finance Bill, the theatre list, the motor-car that has
an exhaust-box, the salaries of music-hall comedians?
O you music-hall comedians ! To you I hold out the
strong horizontal hand of friendship. I wish I had
your salaries !
Of none of these am I going to write, least of all of the
motor-car that has an exhaust-box.
The elementary muse has no exhaust-box.

I will write about the weather.
Dear Editor, I know I shall bore you, but others will
punctually do that for ever and ever.
I know that you find many poems about the weather on
your table.

I know that a vast similitude spans them, and they are
generally bad,

And they are generally signed with the name of some
idiot or another.

I also will sign my name, intrepid, irresponsible.

I hear men cursing, the variegated curses I hear,
The tan-faced navvy cursing as he should curse,
vehemently, primitively,

The undergrad cursing, and the scout of the undergrad
cursing,

Each cursing in the way peculiar to himself and to none
else,

Uttering with open mouths their strong melodious dis-
satisfaction.

(I swear I think there is nothing but immorality!)

Rain, rain, rain !

Delaying not, hurrying not,

Merely going on,

Whispering through the night, and very plainly before
breakfast,

And again rain, rain, rain, rain, rain.

(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher out of
themselves than it sprouts fresh and continual out
of itself !)

The rain never tires,
 The rain is profuse, incomprehensible.
 (Be not discouraged, O rain ! keep on pegging away !)
 I too am profuse, incomprehensible, neither am I dis-
 couraged.

Give me the splendid, silent sun !
 Give me Nature, give me again, O Nature, your primal
 sanitation !

.

I feel that the Editor will not accept my romanza.
 (In a week the sun will shine, and my warble will be
 effete, out-of-date, unspontaneous.)

O spontaneity ! O joy of the fresh and never before
 uttered !

I feel that the Editor will return it, regretfully, apologeti-
 cally,

And I writing uselessly, uselessly all the night !

Away with his formule !

Away with all bat-eyed and materialistic Editors ! . . .

O to create an epithet, original, lurid, competently
 explosive !

THE BALLAD OF AGE AND YOUTH

(After R. K.)

*O, Age is Age, and Youth is Youth, and Youth must keep
his place,
For Senior and Fresher are Age and Youth, and the twain
shall not embrace ;
But it's up the spout with Age and Youth, Senior and
Fresher too,
When a Man has stolen a Currant Cake, and a Man goes
forth to pursue !*

Samuel is out to raise some grub, for never a bite has he,
And he has lifted a Fresher's cake, that the Fresher had
bought for tea ;
He has lifted it out of the scouter-hole (for the Fresher
was out and away),
And turned him back in his thievish track to eat the
stolen prey.
Then up the Fresher stood and curs'd, and his loss was
noised abroad :
'For who,' quoth he, 'hath bagged my cake, that I
bought to grace my board ?'

68 THE BALLAD OF AGE AND YOUTH

Then up and answered the Fresher's Scout : ' It is lost
for good and all,

For know ye not how Senior seat, and what is like to befall ?
A cake is a cake till the sun goes cold, yet it can't be
a cake for long,—

For what is a single currant cake when a Senior's jaws
be strong ?

But whoso harries a Senior's theft and chases him to his den,
I wis he is neither Fresher nor God, but a Man in a World
of Men.

But if ye are game and will try that same, why, haste ye
to Staircase Two ;

For a swift attack may win it back before he hath cut
it through.'

The Fresher has gone to dun for his cake, and a raw
rough dun was he,

With a Fresher's gas and the cheek of an ass and the
air of a Beerbohm Tree.

O, he up and flew to Staircase Two as fast as he could fly,
And all for the sake of a currant cake which a couple
of bob would buy,—

All for the sake of a currant cake, which a Senior had just
purloined,—

But a Man is a Man (as ye've heard it said) till Age and
Youth be joined.

He has entered in to Samuel's room, he has seized a cricket bat,

He has hurled it hard at Samuel's head on his sofa as he sat.

'Ye shy like a Fresher,' Samuel said, as a window-pane caved in :

'Ye have smashed my glass, ye bloomin' ass, and made the deuce of a din ;

Now tell me in straight-flung words and few what the dickens ye mean,' quoth he ;

'Sit down and partake of my currant cake, and drink of my China tea,

Or by the Lord ! of my own accord will I up and kick ye out :

'Tis only by patience of mine,' quoth he, ' that I do not yell for my Scout.'

Brightly answered the Fresher then : ' I drink no tea with a thief ;

I'll fight for the cake, *my* currant cake, and my fighting is fierce and brief ;

But if ye fear to meet me here for your stolen bite and sup,

I'll fight it out with your beastly Scout—yell, cur, and call him up ! '

70 THE BALLAD OF AGE AND YOUTH

Samuel has slapped him on the back where spine meets collar-stud :

‘Talk not of asses and curs,’ quoth he, ‘when Blood-hound meets with Blood.

Fresher or no, ye have grit and go, and that is enough for me. By the cake ye bought ! ye were nobly taught to go it large and free.’

Brightly answered the Fresher again : ‘Now hold and keep my cake.

Yea, take it ye must—and I straightly trust ye suffer no after-ache.’

But, ‘Nay !’ cried Samuel, ‘I trow not so. We be two strong men, ’tis true.

But the younger digestion is stronger, I wis, and the cake must go with you.

Ye would make a gift to your foe,’ quoth he, ‘but our feud is at an end.

Ye would make a gift to your foe,’ quoth he, ‘ye shall take a gift from your friend !

A gift for a gift—ye shall take them both, ye whelp of a full-blooded dam !

Go hence and take your currant cake and my pot of raspberry jam !’

They have looked each other between the eyes, and there they found no green ;

THE BALLAD OF AGE AND YOUTH 71

They have shaken hands like Brother Bloods—and their
hands were fairly clean ;

They have sworn an oath like Brother Bloods with cool,
unblushing brow :

They have done lots more like Brother Bloods which
I can't remember now.

The Fresher has hied him back to his rooms with his
cake and the jam to boot,

And twenty Freshers were gathered there and cheered
at sight of the loot.

' Dry up ! dry up ! ' cried the Fresher then, ' make sure
that the tea be hot.

Hungry I am, but I've cake and jam—and I needn't
return the pot ! '

*O, Age is Age, and Youth is Youth, and Youth must keep
his place,*

*For Senior and Fresher are Age and Youth, and the twain
shall not embrace ;*

*But it's up the spout with Age and Youth, Senior and
Fresher too,*

*When a Man has stolen a Currant Cake, and a Man goes
forth to pursue !*

THE NAUTICAL B.A.'S

A CERTAIN Professor,

Who couldn't on any occasion propound
A good tip for the Derby ; whose views upon dress or
The value of rowing were very unsound ;
Who, utterly failing (poor man !) to discover
The charm of our musical comedy actresses,
Scoffed at the notion of being a lover
Of ladies' side ringlets, front fringes, or back tresses ;
Who all the same
At his own little game
Could put every other professor to shame,
And knew rather better in Greek or in Latin
Where every infernal quotation came pat in
Than ever the Greeks did themselves, or the Romans.—
In fact, though he was, as I've stated, a flat in
The matters that count, in dead languages no man's
Been able to equal him,
Beat in the sequel him,
Or (be he M.A. or even D.D.) quell him—
This notable don, I am sorry to say,
Was seized with a rather malignant disease,

And his doctors decreed, without any delay
He must try the effect of the brine and the breeze.

Now if you were touring the world with a wallet you'd
Hardly make choice of a liner for solitude.
So our Professor laid under embargo boats
Built to take passengers, thinking that cargo boats
Suited a man of his studious propensities
Better than populous floating immensities.
Therefore one day
He sailed in a suitable vessel from Bristol
Out of the docks where the odours assist ol-
factory organs to gain and preserve a
Strong sense of their duties. The ship, by-the-way,
Was christened with wonderful aptness, 'Minerva.'

The crew were a shockingly ruffianly lot,
And discipline (pardon the phrase!) went to pot,
And so in a gale, as you'd really expect,
The noble 'Minerva' was finally wrecked.
Now I'm utterly fogged in affairs of geography,
Just as a film sometimes is in photography;
Therefore I cannot relate any more
Than the fact that the crew
(And the don, of course, too)
Safely succeeded in getting to dry land—

A horribly bleak inhospitable shore,
Which they found with dismay was no more than an
island.

Now came the chance of the don,
And he seized his opportunity.
On board he had rather been looked upon
As a lunatic loose with complete impunity.
Harmless—O quite !
Yet hardly *right* ;
But now he fairly shone.
You know (or perhaps you don't) how boring
The jolliest desert isle can be.
Even the wild delights of exploring
End at last in satiety,
Especially when the desert isle's
Exploring extent is five square miles.
And so the officers and crew,
Finding not much else to do,
At the feet of their sick Gamaliel sat in
Ecstasy, learning Greek and Latin.

Learning !

By Jove, they were every one of 'em burning,
Palpitating, and simply yearning
For Latin and Greek and they didn't know it !

But now they wallowed in every poet—
Learnt to hear the great surf-comber
Burst in the glorious roll of Homer—
Gaily romped through Cicero, Juvenal,
Aeschylus, Sophocles, Horace, and Caesar,—
And very quickly began to improve in all
Knowledge for which Lit. Hum. degrees are
Always conferred. For the don, of course, knew
The classics by heart, and through and through.

Well, whether it was the sea-gulls' eggs,
Or carrion pigeon's toasted legs,
Or the lack of a qualified hospital nurse,
I really can't pretend to say ;
But the poor Professor grew worse and worse,
And eventually passed away.
His pupils conducted the funeral rites
In the most admired of classic styles.
They fed his pyre for many nights,
And the flames were visible for miles.
A vessel happened to see the fire,
And coming in for a better view,
Smelt the smell of the classic pyre,
And obligingly saved the 'Minerva's' crew.
No one had any idea of stopping,
And so they were landed in time at Wapping.

Now, being crammed with classic knowledge,
Simply bursting with the arts—
Men, in fact, of wit and parts,
They one and all came up to college.

Oxford scholarships and prizes
Fell before them all like skittles,
Elegiac exercises
They would gobble like their victuals.
They'd roll out a dozen of somebody's verses
Easier far than a mouthful of curses,
And quickly compose
A magnificent prose
Better than any of Cicero's.

On the river they *were* magnificent !
Every one of them in a jiffy sent
His particular College Eight
Into the realms of the First Division.
An average coach is apt to grate
On lovers of lingual precision,
But they !—Well, really, very few rid
Themselves of language *quite* so lurid.
But what's the odds, if your words *are* blue
(Or, as some prefer to put it, 'fruity'),
As long as you do your bounden duty
By turning out a decent crew ?

They each concluded a great career
By taking a First in their second year,
Which was done, of course, by special rule.

And now in many a seaport town
And modest fishing hamlet you'll

Observe a man in a cap and gown,
Ragged, and most grotesquely showing

Over a common seaman's jersey.

Respect that man, when the thought occurs, he
Altered the style of Oxford rowing ;

For nowadays the style that's seen
Is that of the Mercantile Marine.

And he lives in quite a humble way,—
But he signs himself, 'A.B., B.A.'

THE POETRY OF THE BATH

(In a recent lecture Professor Raleigh stated that he had never heard of any one writing a poem on the morning ablutions. But, he went on to say, 'I don't know that the sentiment of the bath might not be made good poetry.' We commend the following to Professor Raleigh's notice.)

WHAT is't o'clock ? Nay, fellow, dost inform
This inert mass, dream-sodden, which is I,
That it is eight-fifteen, and now (ah me !) is high
Time to arise ? Must I, sulkily crawling from my bed,
Drowsy and warm,
Night's comfortable garb unkindly shed,
And get me to my bath ?

Come, let me tread the martyr's flinty path !
Come ! do not pause upon the horrid brink,
O shivering soul of mine ! The fatal drink
Socrates shunned not (classical allusion).
What ! shall I fear the tide,
Like some poor, conscience-stricken suicide ?
This is no potent hemlock's vile infusion,
No garbage-glutted Thames—

This is a healthy sluice
Of honest water, such as soon expands a
Man's chest ; such as no Englishman condemns
In nasty Billingsgate. Nay, what the deuce !
I'll sing its praises in a separate stanza.
(I still continue hovering on the brink,
Wooing with pen and ink
The Muse that tolerates this species of romanza.)

O limpid water, was it thou,
O'erhung with many a mossy bough,
Didst hold the vain reflection of Narcissus ?—
The faces of how many maids,
Who strayed to thee through verdant glades
With nut-brown hair in tangled braids,
In thy mute depths have cried (mutely, of course),
‘Come, kiss us !’ ?

Or did thy sunny waters smile
In some enchanted Grecian isle,
Or fall in Ithaca in headlong torrents ?
Or (you'll excuse my state of doubt)
Wert thou the famous *fons* about
Which Horace takes the chance to spout
At greater length, indeed, than the occasion warrants ?

Whate'er thou wast—come, I will take the plunge ! . . .

Whate'er thou *wast*, thou *art* confounded cold . . .

Where in the world is that accursed sponge ? . . .

Where's the ellipse of Lever Brothers rolled ?

Nay, this will never do ! ('Got him, the brute !)

Suppose I picture in poetic style

How soap, when made by firms of good repute,

Is manufactured in our noble isle ?

Thou, for example, whom I urge to lather,

Who art a blessing and a boon, though rather

Elusive, crass, and contrary,—O thou

Before whose slippery qualities I bow !

To thy perfected status thou didst soar

From horrid anguish and from pangs galore,

When thou (O genesis to shudder at !)

Wast first created from confounded fat.

The rapt pedestrian near thy place of birth

Perceived the signs that thou wert come to earth,

Sniffing with eager nostrils went his way,

And cried to all, ' Rejoice ! Soap has been born to-day.'

(I'll try the sponge. It's difficult to cope

With any further rhapsodies on soap.)

O sponge of mine ! in foreign deeps
The diver hunted thee,
Where the stout Kraken soundly sleeps
(Tennyson's Works, q.v.),
The diver tracked thee to thy lair,
Stealthy he followed in—
O water, water everywhere,
And not a drop of gin !

O gallantly the diver fought
With thee beneath the brine !
And subsequently thou wast bought
By me for five-and-nine.

The soap departs once more upon the prowl.
It is enough. Sluice me, O sponge, once more !
But do not slop the water on the floor.
Now from the deeps uprising with a growl,
Like Aphrodite in her oyster-shell,
I cry with blind and streaming eyes, ' Ah, *quel*
Dommage ! these groping hands *can't* find the beastly
towel ! '

POETS ON THE ISIS

(With apologies all round)

P. B. SHELLEY (*Two. Rather unhappy*) :

No change, no rest at all ! Yet I endure.
The galling blisters scarify the sense
With their compelling agonies ; the seat
Irks with its burning pain the very bone.
O hang it all ! strain, strain ever, for ever !

W. E. HENLEY (*Bow. Decidedly cocky*) :

In the fell clutching of my oar,
In the harsh rasping of my seat,
Beneath the dripping of my gore
I'm pretty bloody, but unbeat.

It matters not a single cuss
How heavily the boat may roll ;
I am the best of all of us :
I am the captain of the whole.

W. WHITMAN (*Coach. Verbose and autocratic*) :

Halte, camarados !

I have seen many oarsmen and many eights ; I have
seen bad oarsmen and bad eights.

But I have not seen such putridity as you manifest,
O Libertads !

I differentiate among you, camarados. I speak with
grief and pain. I say that the rowing of Bow is
less down-sweeping, all-sufficing, ecstatic, vivid, life-
instilling than the rowing of the rest of you.

Behold ! it is elementary.

In brief, altogether rotten.

Allons ! En masse, if you please.

R. L. STEVENSON (*Cox. Cheerful, but inefficient*) :

O it's I that am the coxswain of a very funny boat,
Of a boat that has a very funny prow ;

For the prow it keeps a-turning (and I think that Bow
is late) ;

But presently I hope that I shall learn to keep it straight,
And to slang the silly rotter rowing Bow.

A. H. CLOUGH (*Six. Pessimistic*) :

Say not, the struggle aught availeth,
 The whole concern's a cheerful game,
 The rowing man faints not, nor staletth,
 And lots of other things the same.

For while the tired back is breaking,
 And painful blisters make reproach,
 Hard by, regardless of our aching,
 Comes, loudly cursing us, the Coach.

R. KIPLING (*Five. Slangy and expressive*) :

I 'ope there's no one to see me now, a-barking the skin
 off me 'ide,
 Dressed in a pair o' rowing socks and not much else
 beside,
 Sittin' a slide in a kicking Eight, an' thinking I shan't
 survive.

I used to be quite a poet once
 (Called myself Rudyard Kipling once),
 Author o' *Barrack Room Ballads* once! (*ad
 naus.*),
 But now I'm Number Five.

That is what I am known as—that is the name you'll
 'ave 'eard
 When the Coach on the 'igh and lofty bank sez an 'igh,
 inexpressible word :
 ' Dash yer 'ands out smartly ! D'you call that a blank
 leg-drive ?
 Now then, you wallerin' walrus ! Now then you,
 Number Five !'

*Forward—ready—paddle ! MARK the time : ONE—two—
 three—FOUR !
 Get in without any waiting, get all your weight on your
 oar !
 Out goes my oar from the rigger,—O, but the beggar's
 alive !
 ' Easy—all—hold her ! Das—shor—ize, Number Five !'*

J. MILTON (*Four. Classically inclined*) :

(*L'Allegro*)

Come, Ulysses, crafty wight,
 (Or if perchance Odysseus high),
 Whom Scylla and Charybdis cruel
 Did their level best to gruel,
 Peerless pilot of the sea,
 Help me of thy charity !

Or may he whom Venus bore
 To a shepherd swain of yore,
 Young Aeneas, sailor bold,
 Come and teach me how to hold
 This accursèd kicking oar.
 So his praises evermore
 Shall each rower of our crew
 Sing with sweet observance due.

the little & the
 strange IV

A. TENNYSON (*Three. Tearfully despondent*):

Hateful is the dark-blue blade,
 Waltzing o'er the dark-blue sea.
 I've done with 'time' and 'life'—you've made
My life an agonee.
 Let me alone. I'm driving onward fast,
 And for a little while you might be dumb.
 Let me alone. I really cannot 'last'.
 My wind is taken from me. Let me 'slum'.
 I have no pleasure in the oarsmen's lore.
 I tell you straight, old man, I'll waste my time no more
 In ever groaning o'er the groaning oar.

I have had enough of rowing, and of miseree,
 Down on stroke side, down on bow side, while the coach
 is cursing free,

While the obscene monster spouteth foaming eloquence
at me,
Hang it all, we're fairly sick of wallowing in the trough,
Grasping oars with clumsy handles, thick and hard and
rough ;
O chuck it, brother mariners, we've had about enough.

O. KHAYYAM (*Seven. Dogged and Philosophic*) :

The swinging Oar-blade strikes : and, having struck,
Swings on : nor all thy Energy nor Luck

Shall lure it back to make the Stroke again,
Nor all thy sadness save thee from the Chuck.

Ah, do thine Utmost of thine own Accord,
For all the unendeavouring slack Horde

To a new Oarsman must resign their Place,
Sans Folly Bridge, sans Iffley, and San-dford.

R. BROWNING (*Stroke. Robust and genial*) :

Now we begin to row. Ten strokes,
And put your life into each, you blokes !
There may be heaven, there must be hell,
And where should we be if the worst befell ?
Sing, rowing's a joy, and here we go !

My oar beats into rhythm (I trust).
We row—is it only because we must ?
We row : but I can't help wondering whether
We're rowing one whit as well together
As some who never have turned a feather.—
Row, row like blazes, for ever row !

VIRTUE : OR THE PARODIST REPENTANT

WITH one monotonous consent
My nurse, my parents and my tutor
Have always been serenely bent
On publishing my ill repute, or
Proclaiming in a pious glow
Where I shall ultimately go.

It is no use for me to urge
My innocence by vain pretences,
Having been often on the verge
Of many criminal offences.
(Once I was very nearly led
To punch my little brother's head.)

In fact, I fear a life of crime
Is gaping greedily before me.
Nor do I shun it—only I'm
Determined that it shall not bore me ;
If I *must* take a lawless line,
I'll carve my Tutor to the chine.

90 VIRTUE : OR THE PARODIST REPENTANT

And there are others whom the lust
That darkly lurks within me destines
To feel my gory weapon's thrust
Groping among their gross intestines
(My Tradesmen and my Dons in mass
Shall breathe carbonic acid gas).

But still, before I raise my hand
And do my level best to hurt you,
I'd like you all to understand
I am not destitute of virtue :
Although too naughty to be saved,
Yet I'm not *utterly* depraved.

For lo ! the Editor (and *he*
Is one I frankly mean to murder)
Lately observed, 'It seems to me
Your wretched verses grow absurder
Each week you write. I wish you could
Manage to do some stuff that's good !'

So after volumes of abuse
Of which I shun the repetition,
I soon decided to produce
A parody of such ambition
As 'with no middle flight' (you bet !)
Should do 'things unattempted yet'.

So having tackled every bard
 And every poem ever written,
 I murmured, 'Kubla Khan's the card !
 I'll do a really novel skit, en-
 tertaining to the public mind,
 And fit to make the critics kind.'

I started joyously to knit
 The mock-grotesque, the pseudo-frightful ;
This was a most delicious hit,
 And *that* burlesque was just delightful—
 Until a dagger pierced my heart :
 'Magnificent ! but is it Art ?'

By the fine vein of J. K. S. !
 By Calverley's and Owen Seaman's !
 Our Muse would wickedly impress
 Longfellow or Felicia Hemans.—
 But Coleridge and his 'Kubla ?' Nay ! . . .
 Sadly I threw my dreams away.

I have gone pretty far myself,
 And made my name of evil savour ;
 Yet think, when I am on the shelf
 And there is little in my favour,
 That I desisted like a man
 From parodying 'Kubla Khan.'

OXFORD IN LONDON

TIME was (in fact, a month ago)

When I was not as other mortals,
But looked upon the crowd below

From out supreme Olympic portals.
We of 'the Book, the Tripled Crown',
Usurped the gods' imperial frown,
And if you wait a moment I'll
Put it in Stevensonian style :

*All, all around is ours, we cry,
The Broad, the Turl, the Corn, the High,
The Isis and the Eights ;
This is the world, and we hold trumps ;
For us the counter-jumper jumps,
For us the waiter waits.*

Indeed, 'twas so. Not CROESUS' self,
Although possessed of greater riches
(The rhyme is obviously 'pelf'),
Had our sublime dominion, which is

What keeps the townsman in his place,
Denotes us as Another Race,
And makes the shopman, rapt in awe,
Bow to our great unwritten law :

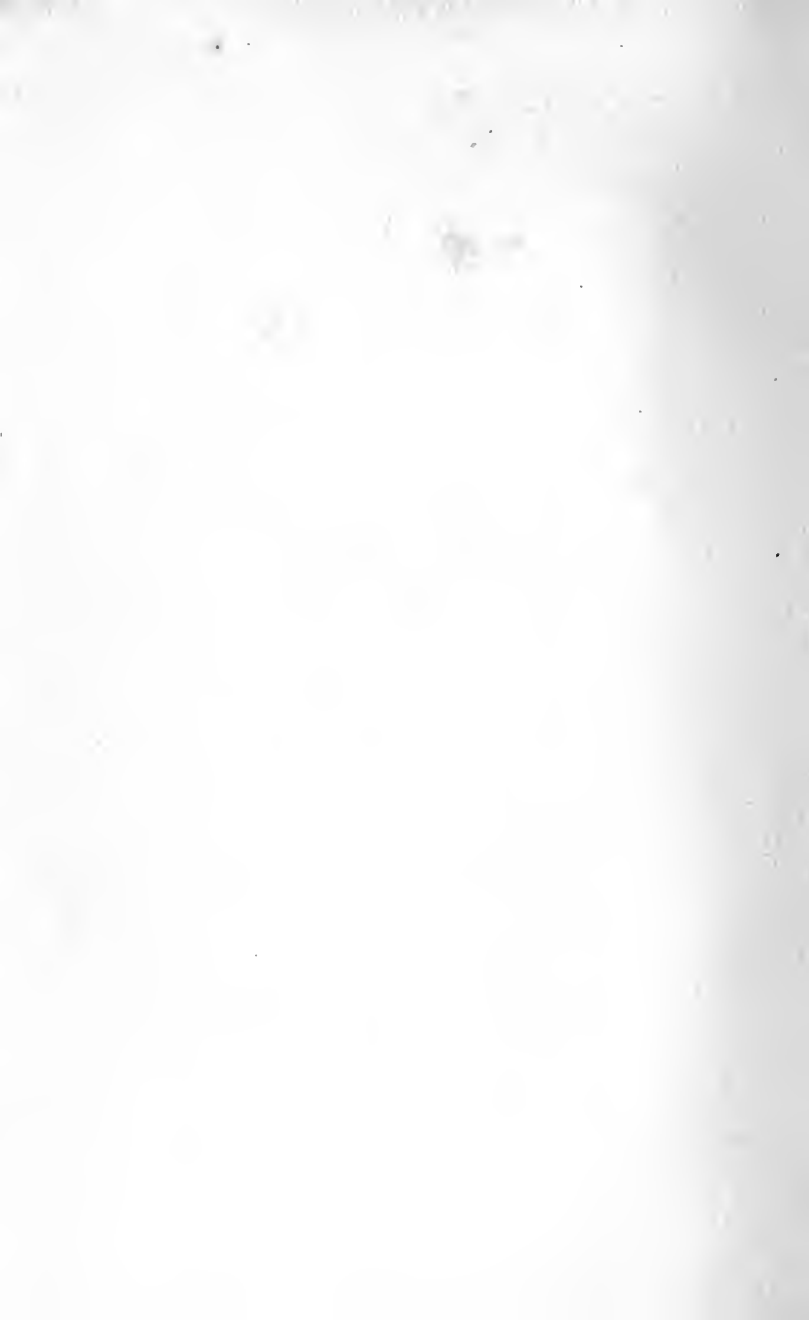
*Wear Norfolk coat and flannel bags ;
If gown at all, a gown in rags.
Thus shop, and though you've spent
Merely a penny on a card
Don't take it with you ; this is barred—
See that you have it sent !*

O blissful term-time ! *Then* our nods
Sufficed to ratify and clinch all.
A horror strikes us : we were gods.
But was our godhead just provincial ?
For now reluctantly we find
That we are merely humankind ;
Our racial difference is naught—
Which is much less than we had thought.

The London tradesman does not guess
That we are better than we dress.
In fact, he values *us*
No more than others, from whose purse
He pockets twice what we disburse
Perhaps with half the fuss.









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